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BIOTECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE DRAWS INTERNATIONAL SCIENTISTS

The 2008 International Association of Plant Biotechnology (IAPB) Conference-Canadian Section will draw scientists and researchers from across Canada and around the world. They will be gathering at the University of Saskatchewan from May 5 to 8 to share information and to advance research capabilities.

The conference agenda covers a wide variety of topics that will be presented by experts from around the world. With plant biotechnology of major and growing importance in the agricultural industry, conference chair Dr. Alison Ferrie says agriculture will be front and centre at the conference.

"There is a strong focus on agriculture, looking at canola, wheat and horticultural crops," Ferrie stated. "The information will be used by universities and other organizations to enhance crop production in a number of species that are grown in Canada. It can enhance basic knowledge, as well as have practical implications."

The first full day of the program will involve a discussion of the past and present of biotechnology. The guest speaker is Dr. Trevor Thorpe of the University of Calgary, a well-known tissue culture scientist. Dr. Patricia Polowick from the Plant and Biotechnology Institute in Saskatoon will also talk about new developments in plant tissue culture and biotechnology.

Dr. Guiliang Tang from the University of Kentucky, the keynote speaker on the second day, will be discussing advancements in plant biotechnology. That afternoon, a session on embryogenesis (early seed development) will be led by Dr. Sergio Ochatt of INRA-France. The third day will feature a couple of discussions on the application of plant biotechnology to the development of new plant varieties.

More than 120 participants representing academia, government and industry will be visiting Saskatoon from across the country. They will be joined by delegates and speakers from China, the Northern Marianas Islands, the United States and France.

Ferrie says conferences of this nature provide scientists with a valuable opportunity to share information. "It's important that we meet and talk about this information so that other people can use it," she noted. "We're talking about technologies that are of importance to breeding organizations, and the opportunity to network with other leading-edge scientists. By doing this, we can collectively enhance our own research and our own breeding capabilities."

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The 2008 edition of the IAPB Conference will be the seventh time the conference has been held. The first edition was held in Saskatoon in 1984, and the conference has returned to the city four times since.

The International Association of Plant Biotechnology was founded in 1963 and has in excess of 2,000 members in more than 85 countries. As a world leader in plant biotechnology, Canada is a key member of the international association. There are more than 68 members in the Canadian chapter from across the country.

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For more information, contact:

Dr. Alison Ferrie, National Correspondent
International Association of Plant Biotechnology
Phone: (306) 975-5993
E-mail: alison.ferrie@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca
Website: http://www.iapbcanada.org/